



Sustainability Research Centre: *Transforming Regions*

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UNWTO Regional Conference Tourism Development in Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites

Siem Reap, Cambodia, 1-3 November 2013



Making heritage sites meaningful

Session 4: Tourism Development in Heritage Sites:
Challenges and Opportunities



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Sustainability Research Centre



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What is heritage?

Heritage can relate to:

- nature – species, ecosystems
- culture – song, dance, stories, art
- history – sites, artefacts

But, what we call heritage is usually only symbolic of it:

- architecture
- artefacts
- food
- people and their livelihoods



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What is heritage?



Heritage is:

- something we receive from the past,
- something that affects us now,
- something that is significant to us,
- something that we value,
- something we can pass on.
- It does not have to be old, large, rare, pretty or restored;
- **but, it does need to be valued by someone** – a community, a nation, or the world.

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The challenge for development



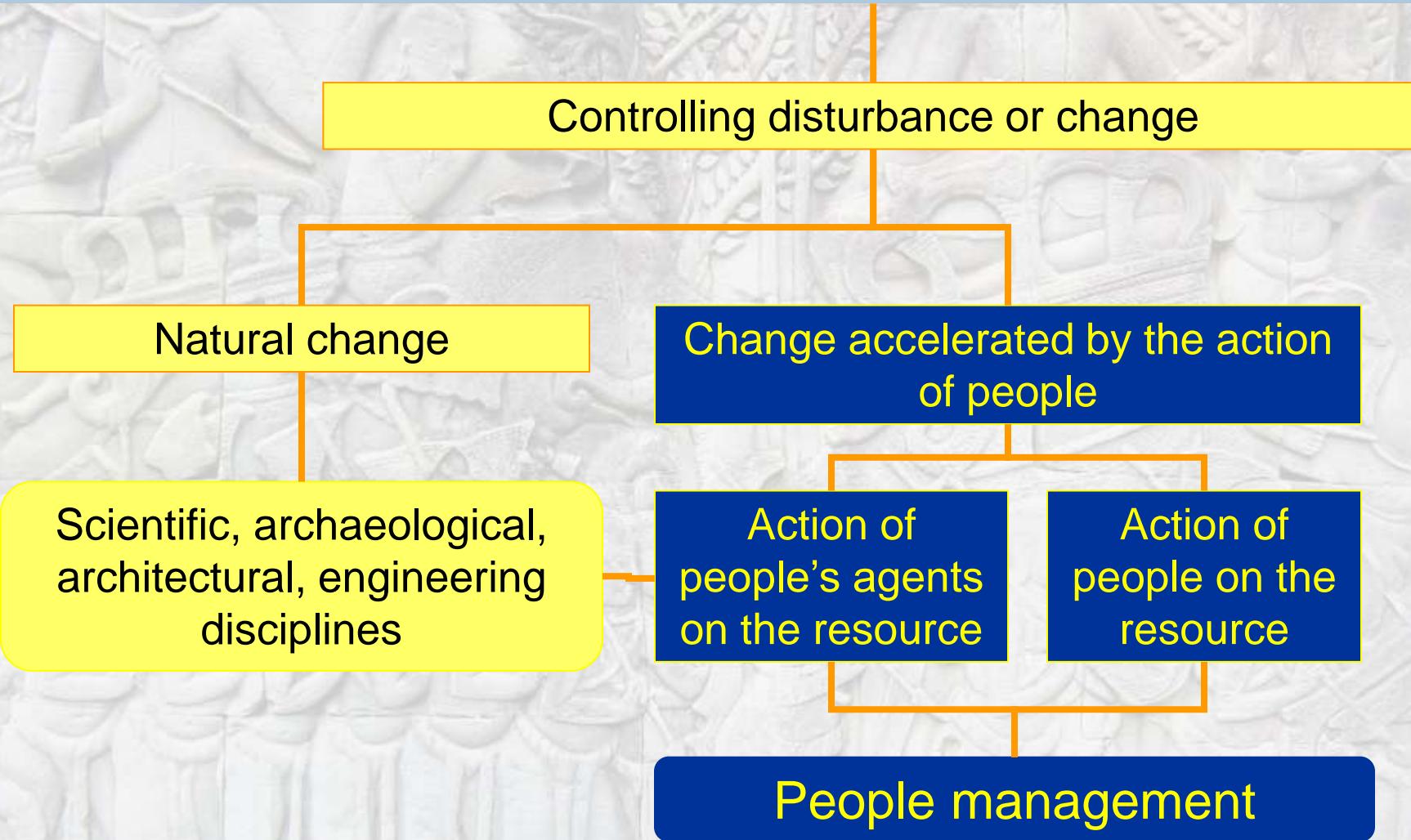
1. Contribute to protecting, reflecting, reinforcing and presenting heritage values.
2. Delivering visitor satisfaction and understanding of the significance of the heritage.
3. Ensuring that the heritage remains meaningful to the community that 'owns' it.
4. Ensuring development contributes to successful management of the resource.

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Heritage resource management



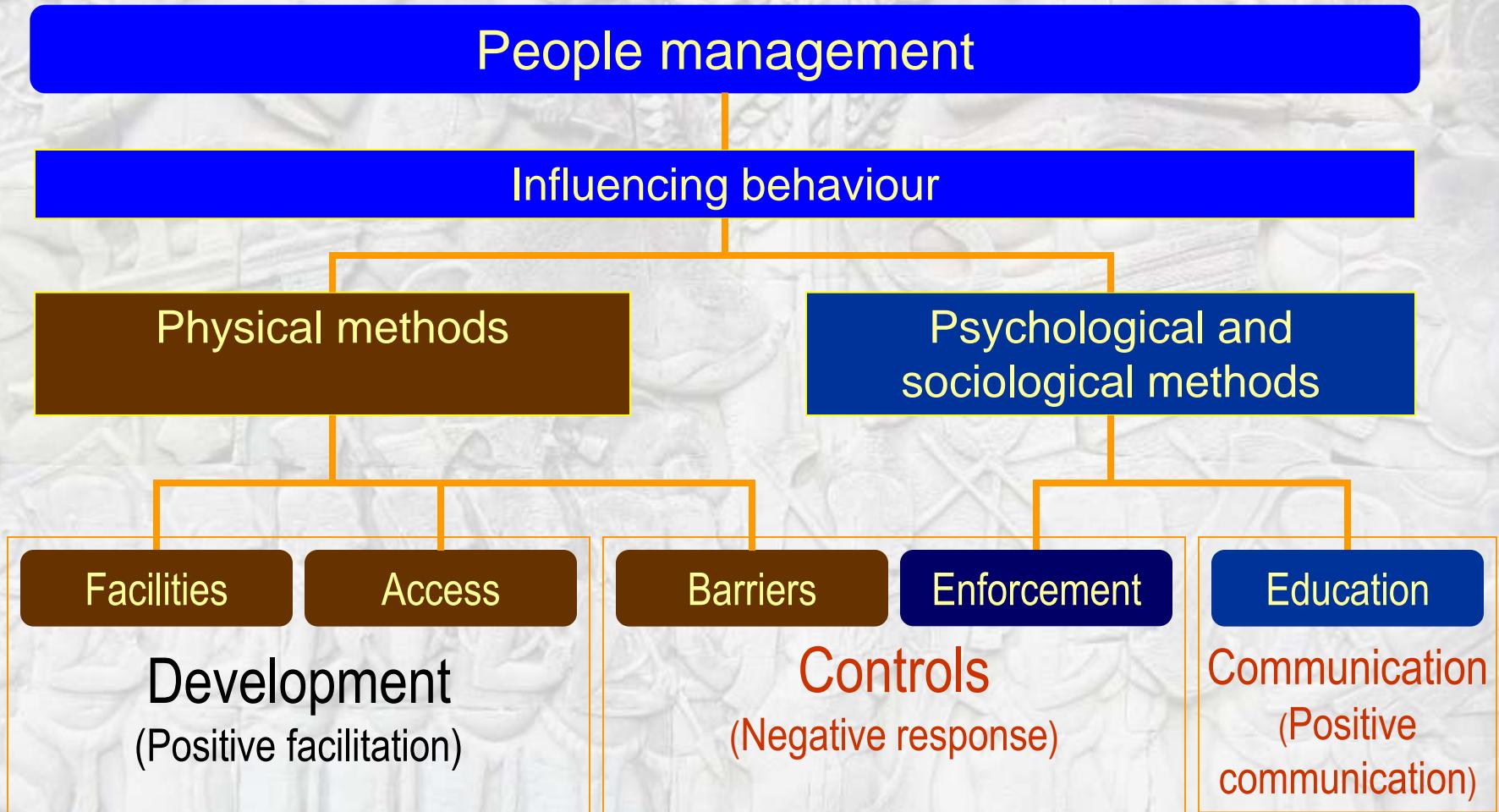
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Heritage resource management



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Where development goes wrong



- Over-emphasis on the symbols rather than the meaning of the heritage.
- Failure to present the context for the symbols from which significance derives.
- Failure to integrate the aspirations of local communities for 'their' heritage.
- Failure to present the whole heritage story by emphasising the grand.
- Incompatibility with the meaning and significance of the heritage.

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Making heritage sites meaningful



- Identify them: be comprehensive, define their significance; what symbols exist that can be used.
- Define their story: what makes them significant; it usually lies in context, not features.
- Use them: heritage sites locked-up are vulnerable to disrespect and loss.
- Link them: sites without context lack meaning.
- Present them: interpret their significance; tell their story.

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Propositions



1. Heritage sites do not exist unless their significance and meaning is understood and appreciated.
2. Heritage sites will not be protected without use (e.g. tourist), and community commitment.
3. Built heritage and natural heritage are inextricably linked: enhanced understanding of sites comes through communicating the significance of the links.

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Propositions



4. Community commitment to protect heritage sites depends on communities gaining benefit from the heritage; otherwise, it is meaningless 'old' things or unproductive lands.
5. There is possibly more meaning to be found in linked, small, mundane sites than in the large and grand.
6. Development in heritage sites must reflect the values of the place.

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Thank you
for the opportunity to present
my perspectives.
I hope it helps you focus your
deliberations.

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